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ABSTRACT

The primary purpose of the Work Evaluation Center at Mid-Florida Tech is to assist individuals in making vocational decisions by determining their assets and liabilities as they relate to vocational goals. Individuals are referred to the Work Evaluation Center from a variety of sources. The two-week evaluation process begins with orientation and registration followed by a series of paper and pencil tests which measure achievement, intelligence, and interest. An entry interview is held by the counselor with each client and an individual work evaluation plan is developed based on test data and interview information. The client completes his work sample task with the direction and observation of the work evaluators. He uses the vocational exploration materials to gain further information about occupational interest. He is also involved in employability sessions directed by the occupational specialist. These deal with resume and application preparation, job interview techniques, and values clarification exercises. At the completion of the evaluation program, the work evaluation staff meets to discuss all the pertinent data relevant to each client and decides on viable vocational recommendations. The client returns for a final interview where all information is reviewed and recommendations discussed. A report is then compiled and forwarded to the referring agency. (Author)

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WHAT'S YOUR BAG?

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Vocational Direction-through Work Evaluation

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Work Evaluation is a systematic process of determining an individual's vocational strengths and weaknesses through the use of work related activities. It is future oriented. The goal is to assist an individual in finding a vocational direction and in reaching maximum vocational development-pragmatically - matching person to job.

At Mid-Florida Tech in Orlando this work evaluation process begins with the referral of a client to the Work Evaluation Center, this referral can come from any of several sources: the school counselor, State Employment Agency through the CETA program, Vocational Rehabilitation counselor, self-referral, and other public and private agencies. Clients are then scheduled into the Center as soon as possible. Every third Monday a new group of approximately twenty clients begins a ten day evaluation program. One of the first steps is the administration of a brief locator test which determines or locates the individual's academic level. This is followed by administration of the appropriate TABE (Test of Adult Basic Education) battery from which academic levels in reading, math, and language are obtained. Clients also take the Revised BETA Examination, which measures intelligence.

Discovery of an individual's vocational interest is of primary importance in the process of work evaluation. Several interest inventories are used: Kuder Preference Record, Wide Range Interest Opinion Test, Vocational Interest Picture Survey, and the Singer Survey. In addition, the client is given numerous opportunities to express his own ideas regarding his vocational interests.

Since work evaluation utilizes work (real or simulated) as the focal point for assessment, the major thrust of the program is the observation of varying worker characteristics or traits as demonstrated by the client during his performance on the work samples. A work sample simulates the atmosphere and specific features of an actual work setting. It is at once an evaluating device and an actual task, or segment of a task, drawn from industry.

The Singer Carrels combine a film strip projector with a cassette, which describes and shows each procedure of a certain job sample. Each carrel is also equipped with all the tools and materials necessary to perform the task as are the Valpar Work Samples on which instructions are given on a one-to-one basis by the evaluator or an aide.

Observation of pertinent worker characteristics may include: organizing and planning ability, following a model, clerical aptitude, following verbal instructions, measuring ability, following written directions, punctuality, use of tools, coordination, eye, hand, foot, color discrimination, form perception, following visual directions, spatial discrimination, manual dexterity, finger dexterity, persistence - definitely is required in making a ring from a 2" piece of aluminum, attention span - the client must attend to this task for a 20 minute period.

Interpersonal behaviors are also observed such as: Appearance - is grooming and attire appropriate to a work setting? Communication - is the client able to express his thoughts and ideas clearly and meaningfully? Working with others - does the client interact in a positive way with his peers? Working with supervisors - can the client accept necessary supervision, criticism, and assistance? Vocational exploration plays a significant part in the work evaluation program. It is a process by which the individual learns about the world of work as it relates to his specific interests and background. In group sessions with the occupational specialist, the client learns why and how to prepare a resume and correctly complete an application. Demonstration of the wrong way to handle a job interview followed by role-playing of the right way by the clients is an effective technique. Values clarification exercises add to the self-exploration process. Here we see clients using a variety of materials which provide information about occupational areas and specific job requirements: the SRA Job Experience Kit, the Microfiche Viewer, the booklets, catalogs, and brochures, the Finney Materials, and filmstrips and cassettes.

A tour of the Mid-Florida Tech campus provides clients with an overview of the many course offerings available at a vocational-technical school. On several occasions observation of a specific class on this tour has led a client to a vocational decision.

Aides are kept busy scoring tests, grading tests, completing data, and keeping records up to date. After the clients complete their ten day evaluation period, the staff begins pulling together all the pertinent information learned on each individual. A staffing is held to review the following pertinent data: education, background, disabilities, interests, behavior, worker characteristics, test scores, and work sample performance. Client assets and liabilities are discussed, possible alternatives are presented, and one or several recommendations for action by the client and his counselor are decided upon. A written report presenting the actual findings and observations with the recommendations is compiled, typed, and forwarded to the client's counselor.

Recommendations are varied. Sometimes it is apparent that the client needs a complete eye or hearing examination, or a medical check-up may appear necessary before the client is ready for vocational placement. Frequently vocational training is recommended at one of the area vo-tech or adult education centers such as: Mid-Florida Tech, Webster Adult Education Center, Westside Adult Education Center, or Orange County Vocational School.

Upgrading of academic skills is often necessary if a client is to succeed in a vocational training program. This can be accomplished in the IMT Lab at Mid-Florida Tech, ABE evening classes held at many area schools, or regular high school credit courses. A goal for many clients is obtaining a high school equivalency diploma through the GED program, while some have the background and ability to pursue a two or four year college program. Other clients need assistance with personal and social adjustment if they are to be successful employees. For some individuals, on-the-job training is considered a more feasible recommendation than vocational courses. Others are deemed ready for immediate job placement - the ultimate goal for all clients. An hopefully through work evaluation the question, What's Your Bag? has been adequately and appropriately answered for each individual.

Part II

Let's follow one client step-by-step through the work evaluation program.

Meet Joanne - an 18 year old who dropped out of school three years ago after completing junior high school. She is now at the point of feeling she has got to do something because she can't seem to get any kind of a job without a high school diploma. She's worked as a maid and at McDonald's and also for a while in her uncle's hardware store. But she really didn't like any of those jobs and doesn't really know what she wants to do.

Here Joanne takes the first step and talks with a counselor at Mid-Florida Tech. She explains her feeling of indecision to the counselor. After some discussion, referral to the Work Evaluation Center is suggested. This sounds like a good idea to Joanne so she is scheduled for the next available opening.

Joanne arrives at 8 a.m. on the first day of her two-week evaluation program. She is greeted by one of the evaluators and signs in. The first activity is the orientation session during which the staff is introduced, the purpose of work evaluation is discussed, the evaluation methods are explained, and the schedule and procedures are outlined. Next on the agenda is the administration of the locator test which will give an estimation of Joanne's academic level. This is followed by administration of the Revised BETA Examination which measures intellectual level.

The work evaluator now meets with Joanne for an entry interview. During the interview Joanne answers questions about her education, work experience, and vocational interests. She told the counselor that she wasn't sure what she wants to do - except get her high school diploma - and that's for sure. And she wanted a job that she would like and that would be permanent. As the interview continues it appears that Joanne would rather work with things than people and that she enjoys working with her hands. She expressed some interest in photography, which is a hobby of hers, and also - "maybe an office job". Using this information along with data gleaned from the tests, the evaluator and client together decide on an individualized work evaluation plan. This plan states what questions need to be answered: Does Joanne have clerical

aptitude? Does she have mechanical aptitude and manual dexterity? And does she have the ability to pursue photography as a vocation?

To answer these questions a number of work samples are assigned, such as typing and general clerical, small tools, sample making, and photo lab technician.

Before she begins her work sample assignments, Joanne takes the TABE examination which will indicate her approximate grade level in reading, math, and language. A profile sheet will graphically show her academic strengths and weaknesses and help determine her potential for completing high school. She then takes the Kuder Preference Record which shows artistic and mechanical as her high areas of vocational interest.

On the third day Joanne begins her first work sample assignment which is the Singer Photo Lab Technician carrel - an occupation in which she has expressed interest. It measures her ability to learn and apply photographic processes and techniques, her finger and manual dexterities, and her ability to work accurately. She completes the task in above average time with few errors, and enjoys it.

Next is the medical station where we see Joanne bandaging an arm. On this assignment various skills and abilities can be observed: such as finger dexterity, manual dexterity, numerical ability, measuring ability, color discrimination as well as possible interest in this field. Joanne did not enjoy this station but her performance was average.

Here she is working on the carpentry project - a wooden napkin holder. The purpose of this assignment is to observe her coordination, dexterity, tool usage, form perception, and measuring ability. Although she is slow, her finished project is of good quality and she had fun making it.

Joanne was assigned the Valpar Bookkeeping Work Sample to assess her numerical ability, accuracy, neatness, and ability to follow directions. She made several errors and the aide is going over them with her.

On the Soil Testing Station the evaluator is checking Joanne's color perception and accuracy.

Here we see Joanne taking the typing test on which she shows only minimal aptitude and interest.

At the Singer Drafting carrel several skills and liabilities can be observed: such as coordination, dexterity, numerical and measuring ability, form perception, spatial and size discrimination, craftsmanship, neatness, and improvement with repetition. Joanne found this assignment difficult and stimulating and her overall performance was above average.

She completes several other work samples and also participates in various other activities. Here we see her role-playing a job interview with the occupational specialist and here completing a resume under his direction. Joanne participates in a values clarification exercise as led by the occupational specialist.

Since Joanne is so undecided about a vocational direction, her work evaluation plan places emphasis upon the use of the career exploration materials. Here she is using the microfiche viewer along with the Florida View Cards which give up-to-date information on jobs and training in the Central Florida area. To further her knowledge about clerical occupations she views filmstrips on that field. Various booklets and brochures provide even more career information. Joanne finds the tour of the Mid-Florida Tech campus of great interest and is exposed to some areas of training in which she didn't know were available. In fact, she returns to the drafting department for further observation.

The last day of the work evaluation program arrives. Joanne takes another interest survey - one based on the Singer Work Stations. This yields positive scores in drafting and photo lab technician. She also participates in a feed back session in which the clients evaluate the program and the evaluators. From these feed back sessions many valuable suggestions have emerged and worthwhile improvements made as a result. The program ends with each participant/client and evaluator alike making an "I learned statement" based on their experience of the last two weeks. Joanne said "I learned from the work stations that I do have potential that I never really realized I had before and now I know how important finishing my education is."

Now the staff begins gathering together all the data on Joanne - her test scores, interests, performance on work samples, and behavioral observations. This is compiled on a pertinent data sheet which is brought to the staffing. The importance of this staffing cannot be underestimated as it literally paves the future vocational life of the client.

Input is given by each member of the staff who has worked with Joanne and everyone's observations are pulled together. In this case a consistent picture of the client's vocational potential emerges. Based on her overall TABE score of 10.8 recommendation is made that she enroll in a GED prep class. The prognosis for rapid completion of these requirements is excellent. Several recommendations for vocational training are made based on her interests (artistic and mechanical), her positive worker traits (which are neatness, numerical ability, planning, and organizing ability, spatial discrimination, finger dexterity, and eye/hand/foot coordination) as well as her above average performance on certain work samples. Vocational recommendations are photography, printing, and drafting. Joanne returns for a final interview. At that time the results of all her tests and work sample performances are reviewed with her. Although she had been aware of the results of each assignment when it was completed, it is good to look at the entire picture at once. Her vocational strengths and weaknesses are discussed with her and the recommendations of the staff explained. Client and evaluator now agree on the recommendations to be made in the report to Joanne's counselor. The report is written and typed and then forwarded to the counselor who schedules a meeting with Joanne. At this time, with the counselor's assistance, she makes a decision as to a vocational direction and takes steps to implement that decision. Here we see her going through the registration process. The following week she starts with one 3-hour period in the GED prep class and one 3-hour period in the printing class. Through Work Evaluation and the assistance of her counselor, Joanne has found a vocational direction.